

# the NEWS

## Jury Returns \$32 Million Judgment in Mold Case

*By John R. Hall*

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TRAVIS COUNTY, Texas – On June 1, a 12-member jury in Travis County District Court awarded \$32 million in damages to Melinda Ballard and husband Ron Allison after finding that Farmers Insurance Group had committed fraud. The suit involved mold contamination in the plaintiffs' home.

Farmers was charged with not acting swiftly after Ballard and Allison filed their suit, alleging that Stachybotrys mold formed after plumbing leaks damaged their 11,500-sq-ft home. They claimed that if the repairs had been made immediately, the mold would not have formed. The result was complete contamination of the Dripping Springs, Texas home, which will have to be demolished and rebuilt.

By an 11-1 margin, the jury agreed with the plaintiffs and decided that Farmers was liable for:

- \$6.2 million in actual damages after finding the mansion must be decontaminated, destroyed, and rebuilt;
- \$12 million in punitive damages “because Farmers’ conduct was committed knowingly and fraudulently”;
- \$5 million for mental anguish for the same reason as the punitive damages award; and
- \$8.9 million in fees to the plaintiffs’ attorney.

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